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(NEWHOUSE 003)

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BY JACK C. LANDAU

NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON - THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IS BEGINNING TO SOUND A BIT LIKE THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION IN ITS ANGER WITH THE PRESS FOR PUBLISHING LEAKED STORIES INVOLVING NATIONAL SECURITY.

APPEARING RECENTLY ON A NEWS INTERVIEW SHOW, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER EDWIN MEESE III SAID A REPORTER WHO RECEIVES NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION IS LIKE A FENCE DEALING IN CONTRABAND. MEESE SAID A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO LEAKS INFORMATION IS ''BETRAYING HIS COUNTRY'' AND THAT A JOURNALIST WHO PUBLISHES IT IS EQUALLY GUILTY.

ALL OTHER ADMINISTRATIONS, OF COURSE, HAVE BEEN ANGRY AT TIMES ABOUT PRESS LEAKS OF NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION. BUT THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE AN ISOLATED INCIDENT. THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IS MOVING, IN A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WAYS, TO STOP NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION FROM REACHING THE PUBLIC AND TO PENALIZE JOURNALISTS WHO OBTAIN IT.

AMONG THE ADMINISTRATION'S RECENT ACTIONS HAVE BEEN:

- STRONG SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION IN CONGRESS THAT WOULD AUTOMATICALLY CONVICT A NEWSPAPER FOR IDENTIFYING AN INTELLIGENCE AGENT OR HIS SOURCE, EVEN IF THE AGENT OR SOURCE HAD VIOLATED A FEDERAL LAW.

- SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF ALLOWING THE CIA ONCE AGAIN TO WIRETAP DOMESTIC ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS IN AN EFFORT TO TRACE NEWS LEAKS.

- A FORMAL RECOMMENDATION THAT THE CIA ONCE AGAIN BE ABLE TO OPEN CITIZENS' MAIL AND ENGAGE IN OTHER TYPES OF SURVEILLANCE.

- A RECOMMENDATION BY CIA DIRECTOR WILLIAM CASEY THAT THE CIA BE ABLE TO CONDUCT SEARCHES OF NEWSROOMS IN ORDER TO TRACE THE SOURCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION.

- CIA SUPPORT FOR A CONGRESSIONAL BILL THAT WOULD VIRTUALLY EXEMPT THE AGENCY FROM ANY REQUIREMENT TO PRODUCE CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT EVEN IF THE DOCUMENTS SHOWED THE AGENCY WAS VIOLATING FEDERAL REGULATIONS OR THE CONSTITUTION.

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